

Selectmen Postpone Vote on School Project

Waiting for Operating Costs and FinCom, Advisory Board Reports

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

With the special town meeting on Monday June 12 drawing near, selectmen voted their positions on all but one of the five warrant articles, holding off on the school department's \$2 million request for designing new school buildings, because they lacked information from the town's financial boards.

Selectmen agreed to take a position on this article at their meeting before the 7:30 pm start of special town meeting once they hear reports from the Finance Committee and the Fiscal Advisory Committee.

Selectman John Tuffy pointed out that the schools had not yet disclosed what the operating costs will be for their proposed expansion. The schools' facilities master plan calls for both building additions to and renovating the Chandler School, the Alden school and Duxbury Middle School. Proposed are an early childhood center adjacent to the Chandler school, a "connecting" structure between Alden Elementary and the Duxbury Middle School that will include a 1,000 seat performing arts community center, and an addition to the

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Alden school. Construction costs are expected to total between \$25-28 million.

The school department has not released the proposed operating budget figures. The current education operating budget is \$20 million.

The school department is requesting \$2 million in the special town meeting warrant article 5 for the design and permitting of the project.

Selectmen did support three of the other four articles. In article one, for collective bargaining, Town Manager Rocco Longo said there will be one contract for voters to approve for the police union. He said there may be two other contracts, and one of those could be for the schools.

Article two will have seven motions. It will request voters allow the transfer of funds from salary to expense accounts or vice versa within the fiscal year 2000 budget. The first transfer is for the fire department for \$12,000 from salary to expenses for "significant repairs to large vehicles," said Longo. The next request is from the police for \$9,600 from salary to expenses related to an accident a year ago in which a car was totally demolished, said Longo.

The third and fourth transfers are from the Department of Public Works. DPW director Wally Tonaszuck seeks to switch \$10,000 from expenses to salary in transfer station budget for overtime. Also, \$4,000 from salaries to expenses in the vehicle maintenance budget is

needed for repairs to a front-end loader.

The recreation department wants to make two transfers from expenses to salaries: \$1,800 from the pool budget and \$1,500 from the recreation budget. These will pay for unused vacation benefits required by two employees who resigned.

Finally, the library needs to transfer \$3,000 from expenses to salaries to pay for additional custodian services.

Article three will be indefinitely postponed, as it was at the annual town meeting in March. This article would have asked voters to sell two small unbuildable parcels to Paul J. Mahoney of 27 Mayflower St. Mahoney has been caring for

these strips of land for years and wants to attach them to his own parcel. This article was brought forward because it was believed the town owned these properties. However, Longo said the foreclosure has not yet been completed; the town doesn't have title to them. Selectmen supported the indefinite postponement.

The board also supported article four, which asked town meeting to accept Duxborough Trail and Gardner Rd. as public ways.

Selectmen will meet on June 12 at 6:30 pm to discuss their position on school's article 5. The special town meeting begins at 7:30 pm June 12 in the high school auditorium.